Books which have influenced me

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BOOKS

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BY

W. E. GLADSTONE.
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.
WALTER BESANT.
W. T. STEAD.
JOHN RUSKIN.
P. G. HAMERTON.
H. RIDER HAGGARD.
JOHN STUART BLACKIE.
F. W. FARRAR.
WALTER C. SMITH.
MARCUS DODS.
JOSEPH PARKER.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following papers were written in response to the request of the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY, and were printed in the columns of that journal. Much interest has been taken in them, and they have been largely quoted and commented on in the newspaper press. They are now printed in a collected form, at the request of many readers.

In may be mentioned that the first paper of the series appeared in THE BRITISH WEEKLY for January 28th, 1887. It had been arranged for some time previously. This will be found to settle any question of priority.

27, PATERNOSTER ROW,
LONDON.

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It is understood that Mr

Gladstone is accustomed to
cite Aristotle Saint Augus-
tine Dante and Bishop
Butler as the four authors by
from whom he thinks himself
to have been most influenced

(Mk Jan 25 87)

II

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE Editor has somewhat insidiously laid a trap for his correspondents, the question put appearing at first so innocent, truly cutting so deep. It is not, indeed, until after some reconnaissance and review that the writer awakes to find himself engaged upon something in the nature of autobiography, or, perhaps worse, upon a chapter in the life of that little, beautiful brother whom we once all had, and whom we have all lost and mourned, the man we ought to have been, the man we hoped to be. But when word has been passed (even to an editor), it should, if possible, be kept ; and if sometimes I am wise and say too little, and sometimes weak and say too much, the blame must lie at the door of the person who entrapped me.

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma, which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out. To be so, they must be reasonably true to the human comedy; and any work that is so serves the turn of instruction. But the course of our education is answered best by those poems and romances where we breathe a magnanimous atmosphere of thought and meet generous and pious characters. Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. The last character, already well beloved in the

reading, I had the good fortune to see, I must think, in an impressionable hour, played by Mrs. Scott Siddons. Nothing has ever more moved, more delighted, more refreshed me; nor has the influence quite passed away. Kent's brief speech over the dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burthen of my reflections for long, so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in sense, so overpowering in expression. Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is D'Artagnan —the elderly D'Artagnan of the "Vicomte de Bragelonne." I know not a more human soul, nor, in his way, a finer; I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pendant in morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers. Lastly, I must name the "Pilgrim's Progress," a book that breathes of every beautiful and valuable emotion.

But of works of art little can be said; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact; we drink them up like water, and

are bettered, yet know not how. It is in books more specifically didactic that we can follow out the effect, and distinguish and weigh and compare. A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived: the "Essais" of Montaigne. That temperate and genial picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain; they will have their "linen decencies" and excited orthodoxies fluttered, and will (if they have any gift of reading) perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries.

The next book, in order of time, to

influence me, was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move any one if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. Any one would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent.

I come next to Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues. But it is, once more, only a book for those who have the gift of reading. I will be very frank—I believe it is so with all good books, except, perhaps, fiction. The average man lives, and must live, so wholly in convention, that

gunpowder charges of the truth are more apt to discompose than to invigorate his creed. Either he cries out upon blasphemy and indecency, and crouches the closer round that little idol of part-truths and part-conveniences which is the contemporary deity, or he is convinced by what is new, forgets what is old, and becomes truly blasphemous and indecent himself. New truth is only useful to supplement the old ; rough truth is only wanted to expand, not to destroy, our civil and often elegant conventions. He who cannot judge had better stick to fiction and the daily papers. There he will get little harm, and, in the first at least, some good.

Close upon the back of my discovery of Whitman, I came under the influence of Herbert Spencer. No more persuasive rabbi exists, and few better. How much of his vast structure will bear the touch of time, how much is clay and how much brass, it were too curious to inquire. But his words, if dry, are always manly and honest ; there dwells in his pages a spirit of highly abstract

joy, plucked naked like an algebraic symbol, but still joyful; and the reader will find there a *caput-mortuum* of piety, with little indeed of its loveliness, but with most of its essentials; and these two qualities make him a wholesome, as his intellectual vigour makes him a bracing, writer. I should be much of a hound if I lost my gratitude to Herbert Spencer.

"Goethe's Life," by Lewes, had a great importance for me when it first fell into my hands—a strange instance of the partiality of man's good and man's evil. I know no one whom I less admire than Goethe; he seems a very epitome of the sins of genius, breaking open the doors of private life, and wantonly wounding friends, in that crowning offence of "Werther," and in his own character a mere pen-and-ink Napoleon, conscious of the rights and duties of superior talents as a Spanish inquisitor was conscious of the rights and duties of his office. And yet in his fine devotion to his art, in his honest and serviceable friendship for Schiller, what lessons are contained! Biography,

usually so false to its office, does here for once perform for us some of the work of fiction, reminding us, that is, of the truly mingled tissue of man's nature, and how huge faults and shining virtues cohabit and persevere in the same character. History serves us well to this effect, but in the originals, not in the pages of the popular epitomiser, who is bound, by the very nature of his task, to make us feel the difference of epochs instead of the essential identity of man, and even in the originals only to those who can recognise their own human virtues and defects in strange forms, often inverted and under strange names, often interchanged. Martial is a poet of no good repute, and it gives a man new thoughts to read his works dispassionately, and find in this unseemly jester's serious passages the image of a kind, wise, and self-respecting gentleman. It is customary, I suppose, in reading Martial, to leave out these pleasant verses; I never heard of them, at least, until I found them for myself; and this partiality is one among a thousand things that help to build up our

distorted and hysterical conception of the great Roman empire.

This brings us by a natural transition to a very noble book—the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius. The dispassionate gravity, the noble forgetfulness of self, the tenderness of others, that are there expressed and were practised on so great a scale in the life of its writer, make this book a book quite by itself. No one can read it and not be moved. Yet it scarcely or rarely appeals to the feelings—those very mobile, those not very trusty parts of man. Its address lies farther back: its lesson comes more deeply home; when you have read, you carry away with you a memory of the man himself; it is as though you had touched a loyal hand, looked into brave eyes, and made a noble friend; there is another bond on you thenceforward, binding you to life and to the love of virtue.

Wordsworth should perhaps come next. Every one has been influenced by Wordsworth, and it is hard to tell precisely how. A certain innocence, a rugged austerity of

joy, a sight of the stars, "the silence that there is among the hills," something of the cold thrill of dawn, cling to his work and give it a particular address to what is best in us. I do not know that you learn a lesson ; you need not—Mill did not—agree with any one of his beliefs ; and yet the spell is cast. Such are the best teachers : a dogma learned is only a new error—the old one was perhaps as good ; but a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the plane of art ; it is themselves, and what is best in themselves, that they communicate.

I should never forgive myself if I forgot "The Egoist." It is art, if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art, and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David ; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art ; we can all be angry with our neighbour ; what we want is to be shown

not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind. And "The Egoist" is a satire; so much must be allowed; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me!" "No, my dear fellow," said the author, "he is all of us." I have read "The Egoist" five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

I suppose, when I am done, I shall find that I have forgotten much that was most influential, as I see already I have forgotten Thoreau, and Hazlitt, whose paper "On the

Spirit of Obligations" was a turning point in my life, and Penn, whose little book of aphorisms had a brief but strong effect on me, and Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan," wherein I learned for the first time the proper attitude of any rational man to his country's laws—a secret found, and kept, in the Asiatic islands. That I should commemorate all is more than I can hope or the editor could ask. It will be more to the point, after having said so much upon improving books, to say a word or two about the improvable reader. The gift of reading, as I have called it, is not very common, nor very generally understood. It consists, first of all, in a vast intellectual endowment—a free grace, I find I must call it—by which a man rises to understand that he is not punctually right, nor those from whom he differs absolutely wrong. He may hold dogmas; he may hold them passionately; and he may know that others hold them but coldly, or hold them differently, or hold them not at all. Well, if he has the gift of reading, these others will be full of meat for him. They will see the

other side of propositions and the other side of virtues. He need not change his dogma for that, but he may change his reading of that dogma, and he must supplement and correct his deductions from it. A human truth, which is always very much a lie, hides as much of life as it displays. It is men who hold another truth, or, as it seems to us, perhaps, a dangerous lie, who can extend our restricted field of knowledge, and rouse our drowsy consciences. Something that seems quite new, or that seems insolently false or very dangerous, is the test of a reader. If he tries to see what it means, what truth excuses it, he has the gift, and let him read. If he is merely hurt, or offended, or exclaims upon his author's folly, he had better take to the daily papers; he will never be a reader.

And here, with the aptest illustrative force, after I have laid down my part-truth, I must step in with its opposite. For, after all, we are vessels of a very limited content. Not all men can read all books; it is only in a chosen few that any man will find his

appointed food ; and the fittest lessons are the most palatable, and make themselves welcome to the mind. A writer learns this early, and it is his chief support ; he goes on unafraid, laying down the law ; and he is sure at heart that most of what he says is demonstrably false, and much of a mingled strain, and some hurtful, and very little good for service ; but he is sure besides that when his words fall into the hands of any genuine reader, they will be weighed and winnowed, and only that which suits will be assimilated ; and when they fall into the hands of one who cannot intelligently read, they come there quite silent and inarticulate, falling upon deaf ears, and his secret is kept as if he had not written.

III

WALTER BESANT

THERE is no time of life at which books do not influence a man. Should the magic of the printed page ever cease to move the heart and wrestle with the mind, the man on whom such insensibility has fallen should receive the thing as he would receive a stroke of paralysis, and prepare with resignation to close the volume of his life—a volume which is always unfinished, at whatever time it is closed. If then, one is asked what books have most influenced him, it is necessary to answer the question with special reference to age. For my own part, for instance, I began to read voraciously about the year 1848, and have read with equal appetite ever since. Forty years of steady reading is

a long period to look back upon, and one doubts, if it had to be done all over again, whether the time could not have been laid out to better advantage. But as is the man, so is his reading. I am convinced that the young man who laboriously lays down a steady plan of reading, and conscientiously *sticks to it*, may be a very good young man, but he is not likely to set fire to any stream in his neighbourhood; nor is he likely to become distinguished in after-life for any special aptitude, individual research, or burning enthusiasms. That kind of reading which begins with general pasture in a good library, and goes off, in course of time, into special lines, yet never leaves hold of general literature, seems to me by far the best. This, in a way, was my own good fortune. In my childhood I had the run of a collection of books much more extensive and more carefully chosen than was then, or is now, common among middle-class families. It included, for instance, Shakespeare, Milton, John Bunyan, Dryden, Pope, Addison, "Gulliver's

Travels," Goldsmith, Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Hume and Smollett, Dickens and Marryat. That boy is hard to please indeed who cannot make himself happy with these authors. Smollett, Fielding, and Thackeray I read afterwards. There were also, I remember, Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding," Bacon's "Essays and Advancement of Learning," Blair's "Sermons," and other solid works. There was a great collection of plays, every one of which I read, including those of Wycherley and Congreve. One would not place these in the hands of a boy, but I have always appreciated Charles Lamb's defence of them on the ground that they belong to a region where there is no morality. At all events, I know that they amused me, though there were quantities of things which I understood not at all, in the same way as I was greatly interested in "Tristram Shandy," though one-half of that edifying work was happily lost to me. There was also a long row of books which have now disappeared from household libraries, called "The Modern

Traveller," each volume containing an account, with pictures, of some country. The reading was somewhat dull, but was lit up by occasional descriptions of picturesque people and their manners and customs. There was also a collection of voyages which included the famous voyage of Commodore Anson, with pictures of the islands of Tinian and Juan Fernandez, and of the ship *Centurion* in action. There was the *Penny Magazine*, and at some times, I forget when, there appeared *Chambers' Journal*. I think the former was the more delightful, because it was illustrated, and pictures were much rarer then than they have since become. For instance, a year or two ago I tried my own children with the *Penny Magazine*, and it failed to please. Among this heterogeneous mass of reading two or three books stand out in my memory towering above all the rest. Unquestionably the book which most seized my imagination was the immortal "Pilgrim's Progress." It still seems to me the book which has influenced the minds of Englishmen more

than any other outside the covers of the Bible. While it survives, and is read by our boys and girls, two or three great truths will remain deeply burned into the English soul. The first is the personal responsibility of each man ; the next is that Christianity does not want, and cannot have, a priest. I confess that the discovery, by later reading, that the so-called Christian priest is a personage borrowed from surrounding superstition, and that the great ecclesiastical structure is entirely built by human hands, filled me with only a deeper gratitude to John Bunyan. The next book which struck my imagination was "Nicholas Nickleby,' full of tears and of laughter ; and Shakepeare's *Tempest*, a play which I was never tired of reading. Pope's "Homer" was another early favourite, but I could not read Pope's other works till long after. Milton's *Paradise Lost* I read for the wonderful story, passing over certain conversations and discourses. I ought to have liked the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*, but I did not till a later period. I began to

read Scott at about eleven, and I suppose that I have not read any of the Waverley novels since I was sixteen, but I seem to remember them all. That is a grand test of a really good book: that you should remember it. For instance, I once read "Silas Marner" at a single sitting; it is five-and-twenty years ago, yet I remember it all. So "Robinson Crusoe" lingers in one's memory long years after one has read him, and the "Vicar of Wakefield," and the "Deserted Village," and certain papers in the *Spectator*. May I confess also that Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary" was a continual feast? I have got my old copy still, and it is much more interesting than any of Dr. William Smith's works.

All these books are the common property of boys who read. There is something monotonous in their enumeration. Yet think of the gratitude we ought to feel that such should be the common lot! What other country, since the world began, has had so noble a literature for the formation of a boy's mind? Then comes the time—

when the boy leaves school and goes into the world—when he begins to be affected by the literature, chiefly ephemeral, and the current ideas, constantly changing, of his time. An entirely new set of influences surround him and act upon him. He exchanges the ancients for the moderns, the fixed for the changing, the certain for the uncertain. I cannot understand—that is to say, I cannot thoroughly satisfy my own mind as to—the influences upon the present young man of twenty. In my time we had two or three great prophets and two or three minor prophets. The great prophets were Tennyson, Carlyle, and Maurice; perhaps Dickens should be added. The minor prophets were many, but Charles Kingsley was the foremost among them. When the history of the ideas of the nineteenth century comes to be written, it will be recognised that Tennyson contributed to form the national mind far more powerfully than young men can now understand. The influence of Carlyle and Maurice was nothing less than socialistic. Those who at one-

and-twenty pored over the "Sartor Resartus," "Past and Present," and "Chartism," became distinctly Socialists—not such gentry as bawl the Gospel of Destruction and break club windows, but Socialists of the highest type, to whom nothing of humanity is common or unclean. Charles Kingsley at his best was filled with this spirit, and I have never read him since my undergraduate days, lest I should lose anything of my old love for the man who wrote "Hypatia" and "Alton Locke."

My reminiscences must stop. There is, lastly, a book into which some of us are happily led to look, and to look again, and never to tire of looking. It is the Book of Man. You may open that Book whenever and wherever you find another human voice to answer yours, and another human hand to take in your own. This Book naturally follows the reading of the boy, because all the books that ever were written are only valuable as they help him to read this Book, and to understand the language in which it is written.

IV

W. T. STEAD

I REMEMBER an old lady in my father's congregation remarking once, in a self-satisfied air, that "she would never allow herself to be converted by such a low fellow as Richard Weaver, or any one like him. If she did get converted she would take care only to be converted by Dr. Guthrie, or some other famous preacher." We all laughed at her then; but her foible was very human. I am reminded of it by the question you have put to me of the natural temptation to pretend that the books which influenced me were books whose merits were universally recognised. But they were not. The book which influenced me first —the earliest book I remember as having been mind-shaping to me in any sense—

was a very insignificant, common little book indeed. It was an old chap-book, roughly stitched in brown paper, and illustrated with ancient woodcuts, which had probably been struck off about the beginning of the century. It was a well-thumbed little book; my father had read it when a boy, and he read it to me before I was able to read it for myself. I do not know whether I ever read it, and, although I remember the pictures, I have forgotten the title. It was a story of a family of robins and their adventures in the early days after they left the nest. All the details are faint and blurred with the lapse of over thirty years, but it was that little book which first among books taught me pity, sympathy, and compassion for all little helpless things, and an almost savage hatred of those who take pleasure in inflicting pain. The next book that made a distinct impression on my boyish mind was Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel." Educated at home by my father, we children usually had poetry as a reading lesson. Cowper, Goldsmith, Crabbe, and Pope I had read in this way before I was eleven.

In my twelfth year, when it came to be the turn of Scott, the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" almost turned my head. I had never believed poetry could be so fascinating, and for some time I would not read another poem, not even by Scott himself. It was impossible, I remember saying, that any other poem could be equal to that. I was reluctant to spoil the spell, even by listening to Scott himself. But after a time I tried "Marmion," and was reassured. "Marmion" was better even than the "Lay," and the scene where Constance was bricked up alive in Holy Isle for her guilty love for Marmion thrilled me with the strongest emotion I had up to that time ever received from printed page. "Lady of the Lake" followed, then Scott's charm was exhausted. None of his other poems influenced me in the least.

I was only two years at school. I went when I was twelve, full of romantic idolatry of Scott and Byron, the poetry of action and of despair. I left it when I was fourteen, crazy about cricket and cricketers. For

some months after leaving school I cared little for reading anything but reports of cricket-matches and novels. After a time the interest in newspaper cricket died out, and I began to season my novels with an occasional volume of travels. I obtained most of my books from the library of the Newcastle Mechanics' Institute, the subscription being only six shillings per annum, and therefore not beyond the range of my slender means in these older days. When I was fifteen, Dicks's Shakespeare was published in penny weekly numbers. I had never read any of his plays, and as I have never to this day witnessed the performance of any stage play, I was then in absolute ignorance of what "Shakespeare" meant. The first number contained two plays, *Hamlet* and *Othello*, at a halfpenny each. I shall never forget the shock—the bewildering shock —which I received from the last scene in *Hamlet*. So invariably had novelists, and even romantic poets like Scott, brought their heroes and heroines happily together before they left the stage, that it was some

time before I could realise that in *Hamlet* all was different. The death of Ophelia had startled me ; that was irretrievable, no doubt ; but Hamlet might still be saved. But when at last death swept the board, and the curtain fell on a universal shambles, I was dazed, angry, and incredulous. I read the play over again, not for the story this time ; and then read *Othello*. It was one of the turning-points of my life. I was fascinated. Every week, until the series were complete, I devoured the two new plays contained in each number. They enormously widened the horizon of life ; they added new and vivid colour to existence, and they intensified my perception of the tragic issues of love and of death that are bound up in every human heart. But that was not all ; Shakespeare was to me the key to all literature. In this way. In my enthusiasm for Shakespeare I greedily devoured criticisms of his plays wherever I found them. Gilfillan's " Gallery of Literary Portraits " contained a lecture on Shakespeare. For the sake of the lecture I took

the book home. I found from Gilfillan's sketches that nearly every great essayist had written a criticism of Shakespeare. It was for the sake of Shakespeare I first read Coleridge. Shakespeare led me to Hazlitt and Schlegel and Goethe. And thus, in less than a year, from the investment of a penny in the purchase of *Hamlet* and *Othello*, I was reading Locke, and had begun to take a keen interest in politics and history.

From purely literary study I was diverted by an increasing sense of the seriousness of pressing work to be done socially and politically, which sprang directly from the writing of an essay on Oliver Cromwell for a prize competition in the *Boy's Own Magazine*. Cromwell's own letters, Milton's prose writings, and the writings of many Puritan worthies, combined to impress me with a sense of the duty of abandoning all literary aspirations more or less prompted by personal ambition, and of setting myself to do the work that lay to my hand in the social and religious activities of my father's congregation. Ill-health, that affected my eyes and forbade

reading for a time, also impelled me in that direction. Not being able to read closely, I committed a good deal of poetry to memory, and some of those poems at that critical period exercised a decisive influence on my life.

The guinea prize awarded me for the essay on Oliver Cromwell had to be taken out in books published by Mr. S. O. Beeton. Among the books so received was a shilling paper-backed copy of James Russell Lowell's poems. It did not include the "Biglow Papers," but it contained most of his best poems, and among others it contained "Extreme Unction." It is only a short poem, eleven verses in all, but I think it made a deeper dint on my life than any other printed matter I ever read, before or since. A rich old man to whom the last sacraments of the Church are about to be administered repels the priest and dies in despair. It is very simple, and it seems strange that I, who was neither old, nor rich, nor at the point of death, should have been so affected by it. But the fact was

so, nevertheless. I was in very ill-health at the time I read it, and was full of the enthusiasms of youth, intensified by a stimulating sense of ever-present duty derived from the Commonwealth. Here are a few of the stanzas, which clung to me like burrs, haunting me by night and by day :—

"On this bowed head the Awful Past
Once laid its consecrating hands ;
The Future, in its purpose vast,
Paused, waiting my supreme commands.

* * * * *

"God bends from out the deep, and says,
'I gave thee the great gift of life.
Wast thou not called in many ways ?
Are not my earth and heaven at strife ?'

"Now here I gasp ; what lose my kind
When this fast-ebbing breath shall part ?
What bands of love and service bind
This being to the world's sad heart ?

* * * * *

"I hear the reapers singing go
Into God's harvest. I that might
With them have chosen, here below
Grope shuddering at the gates of night."

Of these lines, the question, "What bands of love and service bind This being to the world's sad heart ?" stung me like a spur

of fire ; to-day, after the lapse of twenty years, they have not lost their propelling force. There were others of Russell Lowell's poems which helped to give a shape to my life. There is "A Parable," with its teaching, that the artizan, the low-browed, stunted, haggard man, and the "motherless girl, whose fingers thin, Push from her faintly want and sin," are the images which Society is fashioning of the Christ which it professes to adore. And there is the familiar stanza :—

"He's true to God who's true to man, wherever wrong is done,
To the humblest, to the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding sun,
That wrong is also done to us, and they are slaves most base,
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all their race."

Under the stimulus of these ideas I ceased to dream of writing, and devoted myself to night-school work, teaching, and other methods of directly serving the ignorant, the poor, and those who needed help. Little as I anticipated it at the time, it was this abandonment of literary day-dreams which

ultimately opened to me a journalistic career. My introduction to newspapers was due entirely to a desire to establish charity organisation societies in the North of England. In agitating the subject I found newspaper help indispensable. I first wrote letters to the editor, and then volunteered editorials, on the subject. This subsequently led quite unexpectedly to the offer of the editorship of the *Northern Echo*, which I held until I came to the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

To describe the books that have influenced you when one has been influenced by nothing but books, outside the influences of home life and one or two close friends, is to write an autobiography. To avoid that let me briefly summarize some of the books which have influenced me on the subjects on which I have written most. The doctrine of the imperial civilising and colonising mission of Great Britain was always a great favourite of mine in the days when it was regarded as almost heretical for a Radical to allude to the Empire. How it grew up in my mind I cannot say, but Sir W. W.

Hunter's "Orissa" and "Annals of Rural Bengal" had a good deal to do in confirming my conviction that, on the whole, and with large limitations, the British power makes for righteousness all over the world. Another doctrine which has not yet become as popular as that of our Imperial mission is that of the Anglo-Russian Alliance. This, with me, sprang directly from Cobden's pamphlets, which I read some twenty years ago, the influence of which can be traced in everything I have written about Russia, or Russian policy, from that day to this. I cannot state with equal precision what book contributed to the formation of my views on the Woman question. On one side of it, Professor Stuart's "New Abolitionists," describing Mrs. Butler's crusade against the Police des Mœurs, had a great influence. On the other, that of equality and justice, I can hardly say. Mill on the Subjection of Women had, I think, much less influence than Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh." As to Socialism, and adhesion to the cause of the disinherited everywhere, I remember

perfectly well to what book I owe that—of course after the Bible and Russell Lowell. It was in 1874, when I was sick and disgusted with the issue of the General Election, and I seemed as if I had no more to say, I came to Windsor for a holiday, and there I read Victor Hugo's "*L'Homme qui Rit.*" It revived life in my soul. Since I closed that book, I have never ceased for one moment to rejoice that I was a journalist, and at the same time to feel weighed down with a sense of my utter incapacity even to approach the ideal of a journalist's mission in these later days. What is that mission? Let Victor Hugo speak. He is describing what Gwymplaine said to himself when he accepted his position as a peer:—

"The people are silence. I shall be the advocate of this silence. I will speak for the dumb. I will speak of the small to the great, and of the feeble to the strong. That is the aim of my destiny. God wills what He wills, and He accomplishes it. . . . I am predestined. I have a mission. I shall be the lord of the poor. I shall speak

for all the despairing, silent ones. I shall interpret this stammering; I shall interpret the grumblings, the murmurs, the tumults of crowds, the complaints ill-pronounced, the unintelligible voices, and all these cries of beasts that, through ignorance, and through suffering, man is forced to utter. . . . I will be the Word of the people. I will be the bleeding mouth whence the gag is snatched out. I will say everything."

That inspiration is a summons, is a call that should ring for ever in the ears of all who occupy positions of influence on the press.

I have left the subject of religious influences to the last. Books were less potent here with me, as with most people, than the example and teaching of parents. Beecher's "Life Thoughts," when I was fourteen, tended to mellow the Calvinism of North Country Congregationalism, and Spurgeon's Sermons acted as an astringent in the opposite direction. One sentence in Carlyle's "Hero Worship," when I was about eighteen, took up a permanent position in my mind,

influencing all else. Here it is, taken from his lecture on the "Hero or Priest":—

"What a melancholy notion is that which has to represent all men in all countries and times except our own, as having spent their life in blind and condemnable error—mere lost Pagans, Scandinavians, Mahometans, only that we might have the true ultimate knowledge! All generations of men were lost and wrong only that this present little section of a generation might be saved and right. They marched forward there, all generations since the beginning of the world, like the Russian soldiers into the ditch of Schweidnitz Fort, only to fill up the ditch with their dead bodies that we might march over and take the place! It is an incredible hypothesis."

The Koran and Ockley's "History of the Saracens"—a race whom I recognised with delight as own brothers to the Puritans—helped me much. So did Hunter's account of Chaitanya, the saintly Quaker apostle of Juggernaut, some of Max Müller's writings, and the Eddas. Lecky's "History of Rationalism" made me think, and Lowell,

who formulated the sum of the whole matter thus :—

"God is not dumb, that He should speak no more ;
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor ;
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves, nor leaves of stone ;
Each age, each kindred adds a verse to it :
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan ;
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit."

While the Bible of the race is being written, from age to age, the Bible—as the Old and New Testament are rightly described—remains the most authoritative and the most valuable of all the revelations of the Divine will. It is not one book, but many books, some of which have influenced me deeply ; others have not influenced me at all. The first time I felt the influence of the Bible was when I first went to a boarding-school. I was unspeakably miserable and

forlorn. I was only twelve, and had never been away from home before. It was then I discovered the consolatory influence of many of the Psalms. Take them all round, the Psalms are probably the best reading in the world when you are hard-hit and ready to perish. After I left school, Proverbs influenced me most ; and I remember, when I was first offered an editorship, reading all the Proverbs relating to kings as affording the best advice I was likely to get anywhere as to the right discharge of editorial duties. When I was busy with active direct work among the ignorant and poor, the story of Moses' troubles with the Jews in the wilderness was most helpful. Later, when, from 1876 to 1878, no one knew when he went to bed but that by morning Lord Beaconsfield would have plunged the empire into war, the Hebrew prophets formed my Bible. In 1885 it was the story of the Evangelists. If I had to single out any one chapter which I am conscious of having influenced me most, I should say the first of Joshua, with its oft-repeated exhortation to be strong and to

be very courageous ; and if I had to single out any particular verses, it would be those which were taught me when a boy, and which I long afterwards saw on the wall of General Gordon's room at Southampton : " Trust in the Lord with all thy heart ; lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

V

JOHN RUSKIN

THE books that have *most* influenced me are inaccessible to the general reader, Horace, Pindar, and Dante, for instance; but these following are good for everybody:—

Scott's "Lady of the Lake" and "Marmion" (the "Lady" first for *me*, though not for Scott).

Pope's "Homer's Iliad."

Byron, all, but most "Corsair," "Bride of Abydos, and the "Two Foscari."

Coleridge and Keats, in my youth.

Burns, as I grew older and wiser.

Molière, always.

All good modern French comedies.

All fine French divinity and science. I never read English sermons or scientific

books, and only Humboldt (translated) of German.

Good French sensation novels, chiefly "Les Mystères de Paris," the "Comte de Monte Christo," and Gaboriau's "Monsieur le Coq," and "L'Argent des Autres."

BRANTWOOD, CONISTON, LANCASHIRE.
14th May.

IN reply to a further query. Mr. Ruskin favoured us with the following letter:—

"*To the Editor of* THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

"CONISTON, *3rd June.*

"SIR,—Your note of farther question, what books have most influenced my style, and which are my favourites, has lain these seven days in my desk, becoming less answerable the more I thought of it. Every book that I like influences my style, and fifty years of constant reading have carried me through more pleasant books than I can remember. But what I suppose to be best in my own manner of writing has been learned chiefly from Byron and Scott.

"Of favourite books I have—none; every

book on my library shelves is a favourite in its own way and time. Some are the guides of life, others its solaces, others its food and strength ; nor can I say whether I like best to be taught or amused. The book oftenest in my hand of late years is certainly Carlyle's 'Frederick.' It is one of the griefs of my old age that I know Scott by heart ; but still, if I take up a volume of him, it is not laid down again for the next hour ; and I am always extremely grateful to any friend who will tell me of a cheerful French novel or pretty French play.

"There is little difference, as far as I can see, between me and any other well-trained scholar, in the liking of books of high caste and cheerful tone. But I imagine few people suffer as I do from any chance entanglement in a foolish or dismal fiction.

"I am, sir, your faithful servant,

"JOHN RUSKIN."

VI

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON

THE Editor's request that I should give an account of the "books which have influenced me" has remained some time without an answer. I did, indeed, begin a letter, but it was thrown aside as unsatisfactory, because I had allowed myself to go beyond, or outside of, this special subject of influence into the consideration of qualities in the books that I had read. After due reflection, I still find it difficult to keep to the point on this subject, but shall certainly try. The difficulty is that nobody can be perfectly certain that he has not been influenced by a book that he has once read, even if he dislikes it. That we receive a broad undefinable influence from the mass of our

reading is, I think, evident from the comparison of any mind that has been nourished by reading with another mind, however naturally intelligent, that has not. As a person who has read a good deal, I certainly find myself thinking very differently from men who have not read; and I find also that I never have any natural or easy conversational intercourse with those who have not been readers at some time of their lives. With non-readers I am perpetually in danger of a misunderstanding, even though I may have the elementary degree of good taste which avoids literary allusions in the presence of the uneducated.

This broad influence of reading has, no doubt, done much to form the mind of every lover of literature, but when we come to particular books the difficulty begins. We may be quite unconscious of influences that have been really powerful. I should probably answer, if questioned on the point, that during the whole time of my minority the classical Latin and Greek authors had been absolutely without influence on me. I

never read them with pleasure in those times. They were nothing but a series of tasks, and I looked forward with satisfaction to the day when they might be quietly put upon the shelf. Still I am told by those who have studied educational questions that nobody who had not been classically educated would have my ways of thinking and writing, and as a matter of fact, although I have been on friendly terms with all sorts of people, I have never found myself in anything like intellectual intimacy with men who had not been classically educated, even though they might be clever and well taught in other ways. It may be taken, then, as a probability approaching to certainty, that there was an influence exercised upon me in youth by classical authors of which at that time I was entirely unconscious. Since then, as men often do in mature life, I have read some of the old authors again, from curiosity, to see how they appeared to a maturer judgment, and these more recent readings have, no doubt, had influence in some way, though it is not easy to say exactly how.

For example, we may take the *Odyssey*. There is no book with which I find myself more intimately in sympathy now, but this is probably less from any influence exercised by the poem itself than because of other influences of nature and art which have been acting upon me since I was young, and which have made me alive to the two great qualities of the *Odyssey*—its living sense of reality and its fine artistic taste, so free from all modern affectations. I gained, too, in mature life, a much keener appreciation of the literary finish and precision that distinguish Horace and Virgil, and no doubt the mere admiration of such qualities in great authors is in itself an influence.

It would be hard to say whether Plato had any influence upon me or not. I may have received benefit from him unconsciously, but my chief feeling about his writings has always been one of vexation that the opposition in the dialogues is not real. All the forms of assent are exhausted, whilst fallacious reasonings are often allowed to pass unexposed. In reading Plato we go

through many pages with little profit, but there remains at least this gain, that we know how active the Greek intellect was, and this we should never have known in the same way if Plato had not written.

There seems to be a tendency in our minds, as they become mature, to appreciate those qualities more and more which are the distinguishing qualities of classical literature, so that at forty we are much more likely to have a real sympathy with it than in our early manhood. The classical qualities are chiefly aptness of expression and simple finish, and these a modern Englishman does not naturally care much for when he is young; what he wants is a new and strong sensation of a prolonged kind, which can only be kept up by literary methods that are quite opposed to those of the best Greek and Roman writers. When we come to see the beauty of a clear simplicity, and when we have learned that the highest and rarest quality in literary workmanship is not ornate elaboration, but the just and exact use of language, then we are attracted to the authors

who possessed this quality in its perfection. The great difficulty for us with regard to the Greek and Latin authors is that we do not know the ancient languages well enough for what can be truly called reading. We deal with compositions in them as musicians deal with sonatas; we conquer them by study, and by going over them repeatedly. I feel this difference very strongly with regard to Latin and Italian. I have given, perhaps, one hour to Italian for six to Latin, yet it is inconceivable to me that I should ever have come to read Latin as I read Italian; that is, with a sense of naturalness and familiarity, and the illusion that I might possibly have written the book myself.

Now it is time to come to the more easily recognisable influences. The delight of my youth was Scott, especially his poetry. I began with the poems, and read them so often that I almost knew them by heart before I had read a single page of the prose tales. "The Lady of the Lake" was my especial favourite, and I have no doubt that

my early enthusiasm for that delightful poem implanted in me a love for beautiful lakes with romantic islands in them which had practical consequences afterwards. Even to this day these feelings are as lively in me as ever, so that nothing in the world seems to me so completely delightful as a lake if one has a sailing-boat to wander over it. Scott, too, had the same love for hills and streams that I had imbibed from nature in my youth, and in his narratives of adventure he suited my temper so exactly, that to read him was a complete satisfaction, without any drawback whatever. To a youth who becomes thoughtful Scott is insufficient, but a man who has got through most of his serious thinking may return to him again and receive from him much of the old refreshment and delight. I am still a reader of Scott, and never appreciated the qualities of "Ivanhoe" so completely as on reading that masterpiece last year. Of all authors, it is Scott who has given me the greatest sum of pleasure, and that of a very healthy kind.

The next influence on my mind was that of Byron, and his power over me was much increased by the injudicious and unjust hostility of one of my tutors, who hated Byron as the clergy hated him during his lifetime. My tutor was always expressing contempt for the poet, whose works he had not read and was incompetent to appreciate. This only made me read them more and think them more magnificent than ever. At this day I am not aware that Byron ever exercised any bad influence over me. His gloom, which was in great part unreal, did not prove to be infectious in my case, but his clear, direct, and manly use of the English language was very valuable as a part of education. As to his immorality, it was more in his life than in his writings, and his enemies made the most of it whilst they tolerated without protest the immoralities of more favoured authors.

On reaching the age of twenty-one, I published a book of verse, and was considered to be a pupil of Wordsworth. In fact, however, I did not possess a copy of

Wordsworth's poems, and had read very little of him, admiring only short pieces here and there. I afterwards bought a complete edition of the poems and read them, with the same result. The love of nature that Wordsworth expressed, laboriously and at great length, was in harmony with my own feelings, but there was something in the poet that I found repellent, perhaps his belief in his own moral and intellectual excellence.

I liked Shelley very much better, though his qualities were too ethereal in their exquisiteness to have any practical influence on my own work. Keats I did not properly appreciate till later. Like all young Englishmen thirty years ago who had any affinity for literature, I was a reader of Tennyson. He has had few warmer admirers than I have been, and I now appreciate better than ever the finish and the concentrated strength of his workmanship. But I am not aware that Tennyson has had any great influence upon me, as there is little in his art that is available as an example for a writer of prose,

and the special qualities of his genius belong to himself alone.

Of the prose writers who influenced my youth I should place Montaigne first. I read him when a young man in Hazlitt's emended edition of Cotton's translation, but afterwards in French; and now for some years I have possessed Montaigne in the unadulterated old French of his time, which gives him the true savour. His wisdom seems to me of the kind most applicable to a thoughtful human life that is to be kept in touch with common interests. For any one who, like myself, desires to keep the thinking part of himself alive without becoming an intellectual dandy or epicure, Montaigne is a great friend and helper. Even now, when I have an hour to spend in reading and hesitate about the choice of a book, my hesitation ends as often as not in taking down a volume of Montaigne. There has, however, always been a want of completely docile discipleship in me on one important point. Montaigne deferred to custom with a degree of willingness that I

have never been able to command, and he erected this deference into a principle. For me it seems merely a convenience in small matters and a lamentable sacrifice of principle in great ones. I should never conform to any political or religious party in deference to custom, nor would I get married, as Montaigne did, because the common usage would have it so. My sympathies have always been with all Nonconformists for conscience' sake, and my antipathies are strong against caste observances, so here I differ from my old master, with his prudence and his conformity ; but he lived in another age than ours, and we may still honour him for the stoutness and courage that he displayed in many ways, and for the essential truthfulness which was the basis of his character.

Emerson had at one time a great influence on me that was good in some ways, but not in all. His philosophy is stimulating and encouraging, but not quite true, because it is too optimist for real truth. He encourages young readers in the desire to be themselves

and develop their own faculties, which is very good, but at the same time he encourages a degree of self-confidence which is not always good either for young people or old ones. The only influence that Carlyle ever exercised upon me was through Emerson, as I never could endure Carlyle's immense pretension and conceit. Of other philosophers, John Mill and Herbert Spencer have had most influence over me. They are neither of them so inspiring as Emerson, but they are stronger intellectually than he was, and in some ways their writings are a better discipline than his. Ruskin had a powerful influence upon me at one time, though I was interested in art and studied it in various ways before reading him. His influence was agreeable whilst it lasted, and charmed me by authorising my boyish love of nature, but on the side of art it was very harmful by turning aside my attention from what is really essential in art to kinds of truth which are not essential, and have never been considered to be so by the great artists. Mr. Ruskin's substitution of topography for

beauty and character as the aim of the modern landscape painter was at one time most prejudicial to me, and the more so that I had naturally an intense affection for certain favourite places. In the way of literary style, I am not aware that Mr. Ruskin ever did me either good or harm. Every author should express himself in his own way, and as it is right for Mr. Ruskin to utter his thoughts in an ornate style, so it is right for me to use a simple one.

My pleasure in reading fiction is limited to a very few authors. Scott I know intimately, but there is not any novelist whom I appreciate so heartily except Thackeray, whose masterpieces I have read over and over again; indeed, I never tire of them. I have read Balzac's principal novels as a study, but should never take them up for pleasure, and George Eliot's books have also been a study for me, sometimes rather an arduous one. I find it hard work to read Dickens, and, in fact, have but a very limited acquaintance with his novels, some of which I have begun, but laid aside. I

dislike his literary method, which seems to proceed by repetitions of little peculiarities, and by describing traits and oddities of character rather than complete characters. I admire George Sand for a facility that was never careless, but have a very limited acquaintance with French fiction generally. The *Spectator* once made a very clumsy shot by assuming for me a familiarity with French novels because I have an intimate knowledge of the language, but, in fact, I have read them little, and should never have read even Daudet if George Eliot had not made me rather ashamed of my ignorance by speaking very favourably of a book of his then unknown to me. French literature of other kinds has had a very favourable influence upon me by correcting to some extent the natural English preference of energy and abundance to exactness. The best French authors have so far inherited the classical spirit that they value precision in the use of language more than the appearance of force. This is especially true of the best French critical literature, which is unrivalled

in its desire for, not merely rude truth, but delicately accurate truth, so far as the writer can attain to it. No Englishman ever acquires a perfect sympathy with French poetry, and my enjoyment of it has been very partial—a mere selection of pieces that I read repeatedly. The French classical drama of Racine and Corneille appears to me a very elevated form of art, like some kinds of painting and sculpture. I did not appreciate it until I knew the difference between art and nature in other forms of human production.

The list of books in this letter is very meagre, the difficulty being that I cannot trace influences from much of my reading. I have sometimes wondered whether Italian literature had had any influence upon me, without being able to answer the question satisfactorily. Shakespeare has not influenced me in any perceptible way, and the only plays of his that I occasionally re-read are the great tragedies. But, as I said at the beginning of this letter, there are influences which we cannot trace. There are often

also very powerful influences from comparatively humble sources. An essay on "La Délicatesse dans l'Art," by M. Constant Martha, has been a very precious book to me, and so has a small treatise called "Théorie de l'Invention," by M. Paul Souriau. Even an extract from an anonymous newspaper article may sometimes be of importance. The following, from an old number of the *Saturday Review*, has been of great value to me, practically and intellectually :—

"It is the slovenliness of men and women which for the most part makes their lives so unsatisfactory. They do not sit at the loom with keen eye and deft finger ; but they work listlessly and without a sedulous care to piece together as they best may the broken threads. We are apt to give up work too soon, to suppose that a single breakage has ruined the cloth. The men who get on in the world are not daunted by one nor a thousand breakages."

P.S.—I hope the reader will not forget what has been said of those influences of

which we are not conscious. I really am not *aware* that Italian literature has influenced me, but if it has at one time afforded amusement, as in Ariosto, and at other times given motives for more sombre imaginings, as in Dante, it very probably has influenced me in ways of which I am not distinctly conscious. So with Shakespeare, but the rough workmanship in Shakespeare puts me out and often quite repels me, whereas in the great Latin, French, and Italian writers, as in our own Milton, there is usually a high degree of finish in the literary workmanship itself which attracts me, and gives me a profound and unfailing satisfaction.

VII

H. RIDER HAGGARD

YOU are so good as to ask me to tell you what books have influenced me. Now, to be frank, I have never been a very great reader, unless the reading was in some way connected with a subject in which I take an interest. My days have been too busy to allow of it, and besides, I have always preferred to try to study human character from the life rather than in the pages of books, which, if they are to be true to art, must to some extent idealise and exaggerate nature. I think that to those who have eyes to see—although the doctrine is a perilous one for a novelist to preach—the tangled drama of existence, as it is day by day revealed to us in every drawing-room and street, has more fascination and appeals

more largely to the sympathies than any novel. But as to books, when a boy I loved those books that other boys love, and I love them still. I well remember a little scene which took place when I was a child of eight or nine. "Robinson Crusoe" held me in his golden thrall, and I was expected to go to church. I hid beneath a bed with "Robinson Crusoe," and was in due course discovered by an elder sister and a governess, who, on my refusing to come out, resorted to force. Then followed a struggle that was quite Homeric. The two ladies tugged as best they might, but I clung to "Crusoe" and the legs of the bed, and kicked till, perfectly exhausted, they took their departure in no very Christian frame of mind, leaving me panting indeed, but triumphant. Next to "Robinson Crusoe" I think I liked the "Arabian Nights," the "Three Musqueteers," and the poems of Edgar Allan Poe and Macaulay.

I can only once remember thoroughly breaking down and making a discreditable exhibition of feeling over a book, though

I have before now been moved to tears of another sort by the music of some chant of battle. It happened when I was a lad of seventeen or eighteen, and the work was "Kenelm Chillingly." I read it till the small hours of the morning, and wept over the death of Lilly. It interested me much in after-years to learn from his biography that that episode was more or less real, taken from the life-experience of the writer, and that he, too, broke down when he read it aloud. It had been written from the heart, and hence its hold upon the human sympathies. My two favourite novels are Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities" and Lytton's "Coming Race." Both these books I can read again and again, and with an added pleasure. Only my delight in the last is always marred afresh by disgust at the behaviour of the hero, who, in order to return to this dull earth, put away the queenly Zoe's love.

I think, however, that I have always been more stirred by poetry than by prose, except, indeed, by some passages where prose, in the

hands of a perfect master, rises to a poetry of its own, which to my mind surpasses even the dignity of worthy verse. But such lines as those of Matthew Arnold's entitled "Dover Beach," or those by Mr. Andrew Lang that tell us how—

> "The bones of Agamemnon are a show,
> And ruined is his royal monument,"

or those again in which the late Edmund Ollier addresses the lost Florimel, or, once more, such an ode as is contributed to last week's *Athenæum**—lines like these are what have and do touch and influence me.

And there is one immortal work that moves me still more—a work that utters all the world's yearning anguish and disillusionment in one sorrow-laden and bitter cry, and whose stately music thrills like the voice of pines heard in the darkness of a midnight gale; and that is the book of Ecclesiastes.

* "Ode to Mother Carey's Chicken," by Theodore Watts, *Athenæum*, 14th May.

VIII

JOHN STUART BLACKIE

"VIXERE fortes ante Agamemnona." Men have grown up to greatness and usefulness without the aid of books, and long before books were dreamt of. This is an age of books, and books play such a prominent part in the best culture of these times, both inside the narrow limits of the school and outside of it, that they are sure to come to the front whenever we put the question seriously by what influences we have become what we are as fruitful workers in God's rich garden here below; nevertheless, if we look behind the scenes, we shall find that, so far as the all-important matter of the formation of character is concerned, it is the circumstances which surrounded us in the impressible years of early youth, and the

atmosphere which we breathed, that did more to make or to mar us than even the best of books; and, for myself, I strongly feel that the two years that, in the threshold of full-grown life, I spent in Göttingen, in Berlin, in Rome and Naples, and the Central Apennines, under the powerful stimulus of new places and new faces, did more to enlarge my ideas, widen my sympathies, and purify my ideal of humanity, than all the books that I ever read except one, and that one was the Bible. To this book I am indebted for the greatest blessing that can happen to a young man at his first launch out of boyhood into youth, viz., the firm grip which it gave me of the grand significance of human life, and of the possibilities of human nature when true to its highest inspirations. I was not more than fifteen years old when I was moved to adopt the ideal ethics of the Gospel as my test of sentiment and my standard of conduct; and to this I adhered steadily thenceforward, just as a young seaman would stick to his compass and to his chart, and a young pedestrian to his map

of an unknown country. This early intimacy with the best of books—not a mere Sunday acknowledgment, but a living dedication of the life—kept me free from the power of those youthful lusts against which St. Paul warns Timothy, and which, if not kept under, have a fatal tendency to taint the blood and to dull the nerve of the moral nature in man. To this book, and specially to this Epistle, I here delight to confess my obligations as to no other influence in the shape of printed paper; for, though it may be quite true that I could have found a moral guidance no less pure and no less elevated in Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, or Marcus Aurelius, in those early years these great heathen teachers were not within my familiar reach, and, even if they had been, could never have laid hold of me with the same authority.

The next powerful bookish influence to which I was subjected was that which came from Fichte, Schiller, Richter, Goethe, and generally all the great German poets and thinkers of first-class rank. To these lofty and pure-minded writers I owe the gradual

emancipation of my inner man from the uncomfortable pressure of the harsh dogmatism, artificial saintliness, and unlovely severity to which the earnestness of religious sentiment in Scotland so readily inclines. Even now, after more than fifty years' estrangement from his familiar fellowship, the grand self-sustainment of the patriotic author of "Addresses to the German People" stands before me with a colossal aspect that recalls the most solemn impressions of Egyptian sculpture; in Schiller I found all that was most fervid, most noble, and most lovable in Burns, without his occasional impurities; and in Goethe I found a grand antidote to the wilfulness of that overstrained individuality which burst in bilious thunders from Byron, and scoured the empyrean in disembodied rapture with Shelley. From the greatest of modern poet-thinkers I caught that significant word *das Gleichgewicht der Seele*, the equipoise of the soul, that just balance of the two sides of our double nature, that harmony of the objective and the subjective, the real and the ideal, without which

the most splendid talents waste themselves away like blazing comets to make people stare, not like the genial sun to cherish, or the kindly fireside to comfort and to warm. Among my other German teachers I must not omit to mention the late Baron von Bunsen, in Palmerston's time Prussian Ambassador in London, but in my youthful days in Rome. His great work "God in History," now current in an English dress, and his greater "Bibelwerk," accessible only to German scholars, I recommend to all as the best theological reading they can have outside the Bible. His life also will hold a permanent place among the great Christian biographies of the nineteenth century. With his most familiar intimacy I was honoured during a long series of years in Rome, in London, and in Heidelberg; and nothing could have acted more beneficially towards the expansion of my mind, somewhat narrowed by the uncatholic religiosity of Calvinism, than the daily view of the harmonious combination of youthful enthusiasm, manly piety, extensive learning, knowledge

of business, and conduct of life in his character. He is and abides with me, above all men that I have known, my model man, while Goethe is my model thinker.

Of great English writers, the one that held the most powerful sway over my early years was Wordsworth. He, in fact, along with Goethe and my other German gods, held out an effective arm to redeem me from that "whirling gulf of fantasy and flame" into which the violent sweep of Lord Byron's indignant muse had a tendency to plunge his admirers. From the day that I became acquainted with Wordsworth, I regarded Byron only as a very sublime avatar of the devil, and would have nothing to do with him. What influenced me in Wordsworth was the kindly spirit with which he tried to bind the highest and the lowest in one bond of reverential sympathy, the truly evangelical as well as profoundly philosophical insight with which he set forth in so many attractive forms the superiority of a wise humility to a wilful pride, and his habitual subjection of delicate fancy and purified

passion to the legitimate sway of reason. With the years of riper manhood the influence of Wordsworth passed away, not in any wise because he had fallen from the high pedestal on which I had placed him, but because I had appropriated and turned into blood and bone all the nutriment he could give me. I now sought guidance from a man who could help me to achieve for what the Germans call the objective half of my nature what the Bible and Wordsworth had done for the subjective. I saw the necessity of getting out of myself, and steering free of the besetting sin of thoughtful young men, viz., philosophising about life, instead of actually living ; and in this my need, as Shakespeare was still too big for me, what *Deus ex machina* could have come to my aid more effective than the sunny cheerfulness, strong, healthy vitality, catholic human sympathy, deep-rooted patriotism, fine pictorial eye, and rare historic furniture of Walter Scott ? To the poetry of this greatest literary Scot, whom I soon learned to associate in æsthetical bonds with the sunny

sobriety of Homer and the great Greeks, I owe, in no small measure, that close connection with the topography and the local history of my country which appears in my poetical productions, and which, if these are destined in any smallest degree to live in the memory of my countrymen, will be the element that has most largely contributed to their vitality.

These are what to the best of my ability I can recall as the most salient of the formative forces that acted on the important period of my youth and early manhood ; but I cannot close this paper without expressing my obligations, though coming somewhat later, to two evangelists of this generation with whom it was my good fortune to be on terms of intimacy—Thomas Guthrie and Norman Macleod, two men the large human breadth, the sunny cheerfulness, the strong good sense, and the dignified grace of whose preaching will remain deeply graven in every Scottish heart so long as Scotland is Scotland. To this hour I remember the strong impression made on me by the Glasgow Doctor's

"Annals of a Highland Parish," a book replete with more of the fresh breath, vivid colouring, and stirring action of a thoroughly manly style of life than any that I know outside of Homer.

IX.

F. W. FARRAR

MY paper is meant to be general, not autobiographical. I am not so vain as to suppose that any interest will attach to the fact that certain books have influenced me in particular, but I think that a general interest belongs to the mention of books which have influenced any person of ordinary education and intelligence.

As a boy I was educated, till I reached the age of sixteen, at a provincial school of about a hundred boys—King William's College, in the Isle of Man. In those days there hardly existed any literature specially addressed to boys. There were certain ancient and respectable favourites of early years, like "Robinson Crusoe" and the 'Arabian Nights," and the "Seven Cham-

pions of Christendom ;" and for Sundays, "The Swiss Family Robinson" and "The Fairchild Family." Besides these there were, for boys under fifteen, such books as those of Peter Parley, and Miss Edgeworth's "Parents' Assistant." The chief novelists who usurped our attention were Sir Walter Scott, Fenimore Cooper, and Captain Marryat. These we read with an eagerness far greater than they seem to awaken in the boys of to-day. Dickens we read when we could procure his books, but that was not often. Hosts of writers for boys have risen since then—Mr. Hughes, and Captain Mayne Reid, and R. M. Ballantyne, and W. H. Kingston, and Adams, and Ascot Hope, and Jules Verne, and L. Stevenson, and H. Rider Haggard, and many more of various shades of ability. The literary caterers for the boys of forty years ago were far fewer, but it was a great advantage that they were writers for the most part of acknowledged eminence.

Since novels were scarce and dear, and magazines were few and not so much

current among us, and we scarcely ever saw the daily papers, every intelligent boy in these days used to read a good deal of poetry. The poems of Scott and Byron were household words among us. A useful practice existed, of weekly repetitions in English poetry, for which purpose an excellent collection—still, I believe, extant, and known as "The Parents' Anthology"—was put into our hands. Before I was fifteen I had learnt by heart Heber's "Palestine," and Goldsmith's "Traveller" and "Deserted Village," in school; and from frequently reading the "Anthology" over, when no other book was available, there were few poems in the collection with which I was not very familiar. I count this to have been a very great advantage. Our minds were made a picture gallery of beautiful imagination, and perhaps, at least insensibly, the poets made us familiar with "the great in conduct, and the pure in thought."

At sixteen I went to King's College, living, however, at home with my father, who was then a London clergyman. For

three years I very rarely had the chance of reading a novel, nor did I once enter a theatre, a concert-room, or any place of public amusement. The absence of amusements and of works of fiction threw me upon books far more serious than are generally read by lads of that age. Hence I had read a great part of Aikin's and of Southey's selection of British poetry. I had received as a prize Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," and I went through it carefully from beginning to end, by reading it on Sundays. I may say the same of a fine old book now but little read, namely, Prideaux's "Connection between the Old and New Testaments." Butler's "Analogy" was carefully studied as part of the regular school course. I may fairly put down Hooker and Butler as authors by whom I was early and strongly influenced. Until I went to the University I possessed scarcely a single book which I had not won as a prize; and as Niebuhr's and Arnold's Histories of Rome were among my prizes, I read them with care, and deeply felt the

charm and genius of both historians, but specially of the former. About the age of seventeen I received as prizes the works of Shakespeare, Southey, and Wordsworth, and read them constantly. Southey interested, but I cannot say that he in any way influenced me. The other two have of course become lifelong possessions.

One book, not at all in the line of reading taken up by most youths, produced a strong effect upon my mind. It was Elliott's "Horæ Apocalypticæ." I not only read, but made an abstract of, all the four thick volumes. His system of interpretation seemed to me at that time to be perfectly irrefragable, and I still remember the shock which I received when one day, at Professor F. D. Maurice's house, I asked him what he thought of it, and he replied that he regarded it as radically false. It is now many years since I came to the same conclusion, and what I have written on the Apocalypse in "The Early Days of Christianity" is in a direction diametrically opposed to that of Mr. Elliott. But I still

think that the piety of the book and its multifarious learning were beneficial to me in many ways.

I have mentioned Professor Maurice, and probably no man exerted a stronger impulse over my development. From his lectures on literature and history, in which I was his pupil for three years, I passed to his writings. His was a mind with which no one could be in contact without a sense of elevation. He was absolutely removed from everything that was mean, false, and petty in the popular theology and religious controversy of his day, and he always stood before us as a living proof that a man could be a prophet, a profound thinker, a man of the deepest spirituality and the loftiest moral nobleness, and yet be for all the party "religious" newspapers of the day, as well as for many of the secular journals—

> "The very butt of slander, and the blot
> For every dart that malice ever shot."

His little book on the Lord's Prayer, and his "Prophets and Kings," and parts of

his "Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy," passed into the scanty store of my mental possessions in early youth.

Chiefly through him I became acquainted with the sermons of F. W. Robertson, and the earlier writings of Charles Kingsley. But these became a far less powerful factor in my progress than two or three of the writings of S. T. Coleridge, especially the "Aids to Reflection," the "Biographia Literaria," and the "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit." I should place the prose writings of Coleridge almost in the front rank of books which have influenced me.

Hitherto I have said nothing about the classics, of which I was a diligent student. In college days I read all Homer and Virgil and Horace; all the chief Greek plays; the Ethics and Poetics of Aristotle; all Herodotus and Thucydides, and many of the chief works of classical antiquity. After my degree I finished reading nearly all Plato. I am obliged to confess, that except from the "Republic" and one or two of the

chief dialogues, I received little or no help or impulse from the "lunar beam of Plato's genius." The classical writers whom I know best, and who beyond all question influenced me most (though I knew most of Horace's Odes by heart, and much of Virgil), were Æschylus, Thucydides, Tacitus, and the Roman satirists. I read all Pindar carefully, and greatly admired him, but cannot trace any particular effect produced on my mind by the study of his odes.

The English writer whom I knew best and loved most of all was Milton. I had a small volume of his poems which always lay on my table, and in those days there were few parts of his "Paradise Lost" and "Minor Poems" which I did not know sufficiently well to go on with the quotation if a line were quoted. For the mind and character of Milton I have felt, from early boyhood upward, a supreme admiration.

During college days I read a great deal of Burke, De Quincey, and Jeremy Taylor. The works of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Carlyle were eagerly devoured as they appeared.

There were few of Tennyson's poems which I did not know by heart without any attempt to commit them to memory. I was profoundly moved by the second volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters," and not unnaturally by the vivid historic pictures and powerful reasoning of Lord Macaulay.

I have of course only mentioned a few books out of very many which left their impress. The minds of most of us are, I suppose, like those coral islands which are raised above the surface by the toil of innumerable workers, of which each leaves its almost microscopical deposit. It would be possible to mention many a book read at the time with delight, remembered long afterwards with gratitude, the source of thoughts which have been fruitful in benefit. To do this is needless. Of books and authors loved and learned from since I reached the age of manhood, I would mention especially the "Imitatio Christi;" the thoughts of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius; the novels of George Eliot; the writings of Bishop Lightfoot and Canon

Westcott ; the writings of Darwin and Matthew Arnold ; above all, the " Divina Commedia " of Dante, and the poems of Robert Browning.

X

WALTER C. SMITH

IT is not easy to speak about the books which have chiefly influenced one, and what kind of influence they have had, without saying more about one's self than is altogether wholesome. Of course one could readily enough write in an impersonal way about what one has read, and what impressions it made; but that is scarcely what a paper of this kind is expected to do. It is meant, I fancy, to be, in some measure, autobiographical or gossipy—to show, at least, what books have helped to form one's character. Whether that character is really worth explaining, or how far it was shaped by the forces of literature—these are not the points one has to handle. Were I to try and account for myself, to show how I came

to be just what I am, I should not be disposed to trace my roots up to books at all, but rather to certain men whom I came across early in life. Books, indeed, I have always loved dearly, not as Hill Burton or Andrew Lang have loved them, not for their rarity, nor even for their beauty, but for the thoughts I either found in them, or they awoke in me. But I can scarcely call myself a man either of one book or one class of books, being somewhat miscellaneous, and unhappily also oblivious, so that, in spite of much reading, I have truly no pretence to learning. On the whole, I have been more indebted to a class of men who wrote no books, and of whom the world never heard, who were mostly unfortunate, and lived and died more or less under a cloud, but who made a deeper mark on me than people thought to be of infinitely more importance. One of my first and, as I still think, greatest teachers, was a grocer, generally struggling with monetary difficulties, and getting bills renewed—an enthusiast filled with the love both of nature and of

art, who introduced me to Ruskin, and indoctrinated me with Tennyson, and would have made a botanist and a musician of me if the thing had been at all practicable. It was in him to have written great books, but he never did, unless I may be accepted as a living epistle of his, and that would not be a great book. From him, and such as him, I received the chief fashioning touches when still in the clay stage, not, I think, from books.

For there was not much literature in that early home of ours, and what little there was by no means attracted me. Boston's "Fourfold State" and Hervey's "Meditations" were not lively reading. Happily, they were relieved by "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War;" and in those years I had the bad taste to prefer the latter; to boys pilgrims are by no means so interesting as soldiers. I remember, at a very early age, falling in with a little dumpy 16mo edition of Shelley, and finding a kind of fearful fascination in secretly reading it. Not that his ideas anywise influenced my

mind. Shelley is a magician, not a thinker, and his creations are chiefly a wondrous dream-work set to the most exquisite music. That music never ceased to charm me, and for many months I carried the book about in my pocket, and read it whenever I found myself alone. I was already quite as democratic as the poet, but rather shuddered at his atheism. But I could not read "The Cloud," or "The Skylark," or "The Lines to an Indian Air," or the dedication of "The Revolt of Islam," even when I only partly understood them, without bringing a moisture into my eyes. Yet the book did not do much for me, for it did not properly give me any thoughts.

Omitting, of course, one's Bible and Shakespeare, which, if one really loves them, are mightier and more penetrating than any other books, the first that really went far—farther, perhaps, than any other—to the making of me was Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection," which I came across early in college days. I was still only a boy, and should have been at school for some years

yet. I had no one to guide my reading, and came on the book by chance, for I read just whatever happened to fall in my way. Brought up in the strictest sect of Calvinists, I had all along entered a silent protest against the thing I was taught for truth; but till now had never got any help in formulating that protest, and obtaining a larger faith. On the religious side of my nature, this was the work that did most for me, and I soon found that my friend the impecunious grocer was quite as devoted to it as myself. We read it, quoted it, annotated it, and scraped enough money to get also "The Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit" and Leighton's "St. Peter." But Leighton was not so much to me as Coleridge; the commentary touched me more nearly than the text, and there were times when I even thought they had little or no connection. But be that as it may. It is not my present business to criticise the book, but only to tell what it was to me in those years. Of course it led me soon to read his poems; but here again, as with Shelley, I

had little affinity with the weird and eerie genius that sang "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," and was chiefly affected by the wonderful melody of his verse. I speak now only of those early years. Later, I came to see that the same mind was at work in the poems as in the thoughtful prose On the whole, I am more indebted to Coleridge than to any one else for what is deepest and best in me.

But by-and-by another book opened up a new world to me. Fond of historical reading, in the later years of my university life I had drenched myself with French memoirs, largely connected with the Revolution period. In those days they might be picked up on stalls, cheap, from Arthur Young's travels down to the malicious gossip of the Duchesse d'Abrantes. But they left a very confused impression on one's mind. It happened to me now, however, happily to get hold of Carlyle. Had I been a true Carlylean, of course I should have been absorbed in "Sartor Resartus," and, from that starting point, gone on to see all things

in the light of the clothes' philosophy. But I did not read "Sartor" till years after, and not then, I fear, with proper appreciation. The "French Revolution," however, I devoured eagerly, being sufficiently versed in the story already really to profit by its vivid pictures and singular insight. I found it to be *the* epic poem of our age, with the vision of a seer and the moral power of a Hebrew prophet, even though I had to protest against some of its verdicts. If Coleridge gave me clear guiding lights in the realm of theology, Carlyle introduced me to deeper and broader views of human life and history. I did not, indeed, accept all his judgments; yet the book was like a revelation to me, and still remains, of all his works, the one I read oftenest, and never weary of reading. Certainly it is an era in one's life when one gets rid of Dryasdust, and comes face to face with the grand poetic justice of Providence. An epic poem, and yet a great history! But must not a great history be always an epic?

One other book I must mention, for it

affected at least the form of any work I have done in letters more than any other. In a bookseller's shop here one day—I dare hardly say how many years ago, but I was still in my teens, still in the stage when books fashion us, and are not merely used by us—I picked up some pamphlets, in yellow paper covers, and printed in double columns. I had never before heard the author's name, and his form of publication was very unusual for poetry. There was but one copy in the shop, and no one had even asked the price of it. The name of the yellow pamphlet I first picked up was curious. "Bells and Pomegranates, by Robert Browning"—what could it mean? One glance, however, discovered to me that here was a true singer. Of course, I had read all that Tennyson had then published with the delight and admiration which it could not fail to give. But something in these fresh, rough dramatic lyrics seized on me in that bookshop, and I became the possessor, I believe, of the only copy of Browning then in Edinburgh. Very soon

I was pestering all my friends to read them, or to hear me read them, successfully in some cases, but to other people they were *caviare*. I do not know that any of his works since published, except, perhaps, "Men and Women" and (in parts) "The Ring and the Book," have given me anything like the same pleasure as I got from those early yellow-paper pamphlets. Sorry I am that they have somehow vanished, among the comelier editions that now occupy my shelves, for the sight of them again might revive some of the glory of those old nights when friends—all gone now—gathered in my lodgings, and, amid clouds of smoke, I recited "How I brought the Good News from Aix to Ghent," or "The Flight of the Duchess," or "What's become of Waring?" These poems were not only a joy to me; they were also a power. They helped me, at least, to find what little vein might be in me.

I think of all the books I read in those years these three were the most influential. I read them all over and over again, and thoroughly soaked my mind with them. Of

course, during the parrot stage of development, I also imitated them half consciously. But one gets over that, and in time finds his own note and sings his own song, or says his own say, whatever be the worth of it. Still every man is partly "the result of his environment," and it was impossible for me to breathe so long the atmosphere which these three writers created around me without being deeply indebted to them all. With my spiritual nature Coleridge had most to do; Carlyle largely influenced my judgment of men and things; and in the mere form of my own work, perhaps the chief shaping power was the earlier poetry of Robert Browning.

XI

MARCUS DODS

JOHN FOSTER, in his subtle paper, "On a Man's writing Memoirs of Himself," among many counsels which autobiographers might with advantage have more diligently observed, makes the obvious remark, that "every person of tolerable education has been considerably influenced by the books he has read; and remembers with a kind of gratitude several of those that made without injury the earliest and the strongest impression." Adequately to analyse one's own character, and exhibit its elements in their various proportions, demands an accuracy and candour of introspective criticism which are enjoyed, or endured, by few. The authentic and veracious history of a nineteenth-century mind

would indeed be instructive reading. The awakening of such a mind to the full import of the law of evolution, dread and anxiety being transmuted under the rays of truth into wonder and delight and hope; the long-drawn, more than Odyssean struggle with Protean scepticism, assuming now the form of heavenly philosophy, and again the grovelling shape of an earth-bound materialism; the delicate adjustment of old beliefs to new discoveries, the lifting of the entire habitation of the soul to higher levels amid the derision of onlookers, and the more intolerable anxiety lest our old home should go to pieces in the process; the welcome though temporary relief from these life-and-death tasks which has been found in the sunny, unanxious life of ancient Greece or in the ideal world of poetry and fiction,—all this would be interesting to trace out; but who is sufficient for these things? Difficulties start up on every path that promises passage through the thicket. How, for example, shall we distinguish between personal and literary influence? Books

which are merely books of information, histories, scientific text-books, professional aids, encyclopædias, all books which have no life-blood of a personality coming and going on their faces, are thrown aside as irrelevant for our purposes. And yet with hesitation. For are not many lives moulded and fixed at one cast by the impersonal objective truth poured into them from a text-book? Then why is it that we are so often disappointed when we turn to a recognised epoch-making book? Why do we seem to have read it all before? We have read it all before in the phrases and principles and mental attitudes it has impressed on lesser books and on the general thought of the age. For, as Oliver Wendell Holmes with characteristic felicity puts it, "Society is a strong solution of books. It draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of tea-leaves." From the talk and writings of intelligent and judicious men we get the ideas which have entered into the thought of the world as an element of its

permanent growth ; and we get these ideas less crudely than they were originally given. But even when we prosecute our analysis so far as to detect the creative spirits who have formed the society which is forming us, we have advanced but a step. For we are the creatures of a heredity which has been accumulating through all generations, though we perhaps cannot trace our pedigree beyond our grandfathers. Ethically we derive, say, from Butler and Aristotle, but can even such genealogists as Leslie Stephen and Zeller be trusted to trace the pedigree of these great originals? Still another difficulty presents itself to the self-analyst if he has been subjected to the promiscuous influences of a prolonged curriculum at one of our Universities. The graduate looks back perplexedly at the score of professors whose combined efforts were summoned to push him up the ladder whose top does not always give him permanent access to the heights he expected ; which indeed, alas! in some instances seems to be turned over, if not to leave him ignominiously dangling in the noose of

inextricable speculations, and fit for neither heaven nor earth, yet to bring him to the ground with a wholesome sense that he is still on the ground, and must find his own way upwards. But as the student looks back to the countless text-books and special literatures through which he was painfully driven, from the mass there separate themselves certain commanding and inevitable personalities. Two such personalities live for ever in the memory and in the gratitude of those who studied in Edinburgh a generation ago, Sir William Hamilton and Principal Cunningham, men alike in their magnificent physique, in their almost incredible learning, and in the minute accuracy with which they held and used it, but especially alike in their gladiatorial delight in a well-fought field, and in the boundless vitality with which they threw themselves into the pursuit of truth, and by which they left their mark on every impressionable mind with which they came in contact. As with the wand of a magician the luminous and powerful mind of Cunningham brought

order out of the chaos of theological opinion, and in the grasp of his all-informed intellect each abortive heresy and each insignificant tract in the history of doctrine was set into its natural genetic relationship. No one who knew and studied under Cunningham could fail to be permanently convinced of the fruitfulness of the historical method in theology, or could live to misunderstand Calvinism or sympathise with its ignorant defamers. But instructive and final as Cunningham's books are, there was that in the man which is not in his books.

Another difficulty presents itself. What species of influence are we in search of? The writings in which St. Paul disentangled a spiritual and universal religion from the wrappings in which Judaism and incipient Gnosticism would have confined and buried Christianity; the discourses and sayings of our Lord Himself, which flashed endless light through the darkness which had hung around the unseen Father; the great bequest of the old world, the histories and prophecies and psalms which build up a background

congenial to the Christian faith—are these to be spoken of, these deepest of all influences, or are we to accept them as the atmosphere essential to life, and which belongs to no one man more than to every other? Are we even to acknowledge and particularise our debt to Shakespeare, or Scott, or Horace, or Thackeray, who bring the whole world of man to our fireside, who fill the dullest life with emotion and thought and sunshine, who never nod, but are always at their best? No one can be expected to record how, in common with everybody else, he has drunk the wine of Homer or the more exciting spirit of Kinglake's prose epic of the Crimea; to tell how politics became tolerable to him and Greek life real in the riotous pages of the Titanic Aristophanes; to strive in vain to utter in the name of all Christendom the debt it owes to the Author of "Ecce Homo" for compelling the educated world to recognise the identity of Christian law with the highest ethical demands, and the identity of the influence imparted by Christ with the supreme and alone sufficient

ethical dynamic; to record how, with all the children of this generation, he has learned from Lowell and from Arnold what criticism is, and what knowledge it implies; or how he has been taught by Darwin and Wallace to turn the leaves of "the fair volume which we World do name." Still less can the most tyrannous of editors demand that we make confessions, or exhibit, possibly, the indelible stain left on the imagination by three words of Juvenal, the discoloured spot in the mind which tells where a poisoned arrow from the death-dealing bow of Voltaire had struck; or the pollution of a part of life by the elaborate literary machinery of that cuttle-fish, Sterne. What is wanted is some note of the books which have nourished what is special to the individual.

First among these I would name the "Life of Henry Martyn," for in it I learned the reality of consecration and the strength and ceaseless growth in holiness which result from it. Here again, of course, it is the personality presented in the book which

imparts influence. But to have a book which enshrines and imparts this influence is a benefit of incalculable value. Others may have derived the same ideas, convictions, and impulses from other sources; but to Henry Martyn I owe an element in belief, in character, and in life which, perhaps, is too individual to be publicly analysed. More freely can I speak of John Foster, to whom I was introduced by the fitting man at the fitting time. Before I had made a study of any writer, ancient or modern, and while as yet Fenimore Cooper was almost my sole non-compulsory reading, one of the most efficient teachers and worst-used men I have known took me in hand and put me on some methods of self-education. Among other things, he counselled me to read each week one chapter of Foster's "Essays," and the following week to write what I remembered of it. As a discipline in attentive reading, in memory, and in composition, this was valuable, but as an introduction to Foster, no words of mine can explain the influence it had upon my mental attitude

and habits of thought. Analytic and critical, Foster is also imaginative and speculative, fond of feeding his imagination with history, philosophy, and expensive illustrated books of travels and of art. Not only are the writings of Foster—Essays, Lectures, Reviews, Journals—fitted to preoccupy the youthful mind with just observations on men and things, but they lift the young reader to "a peak of Darien," whence a new world opens to his view, the immeasurable ocean of human life where, if other explorers have penetrated, they have left no track and mapped out no discoveries. Foster possesses the opening mind with the belief that severe thinking on the motives of men, the varying situations of human life, the influences which mould character, and the principles which ought to govern men, will always attain results of value and of interest. In his writings we see such results, and the process by which they are reached. Doubtless, such writers as Emerson and Carlyle would as effectively win the student to observe and investigate human nature, but if there are

in the writings of Foster fewer nuggets of enormous weight, there is also less of alloy, a more unmixed sanity of judgment than in these more frequented teachers. Apart from all comparisons, there is in Foster an intense thirst for knowledge, an affinity for what is spiritual, a keenness of observation, a closeness of reasoning, and a living vigour which give depth and felicity to his style and make his writing continuously trenchant and suggestive.

In the natural order of things, he who is susceptible in youth to the influence of Foster will one day find himself led captive by Robert Browning. Many-sided as this most masculine and thought-laden of our poets is, he will find many readers who have not graduated in Foster's school. But he who has relished the independence, the rugged originality, the fruitfulness of the one, can scarcely fail to be strongly attracted by the other. It was said of Crabbe that he was "Pope in worsted stockings": it is quite as true to say that Foster is Browning in worsted stockings. There is the same

robust fibre of thought, the same pioneering fearlessness, but family likeness to the lecturer and essayist is scarcely recognisable in the travelled poet who has lived in every human condition, and by the marvellous power of poetic genius read from the inside the thoughts and the life of every age. Shakespeare is more simply human, and in normal human life has a wider range. Browning has no women so lovable, no fools so motley, no clowns so irresistible; nor have the bulk of his characters that inexplicable touch which makes them live and walk as real persons. But could Shakespeare himself have entered into a Ned Bratts, or a Bishop Blougram, or a Fra Lippo Lippi, as Browning has done? For what Browning lacks in universality he has made up for by culture, by that enlargement and enlightenment which the religious problems of our own day have brought, and by confronting the Christian faith with every phase of individual experience and of the general progress of thought among men. But of Browning others can better speak, though

few can have found in him so unfailing a stimulus.

It may seem intentionally perverse or unintentionally foolish if to these two apparently incongruous names I should add a third, more incongruous still. But, if truth is to be adhered to, and may be expected to be of service, I must make bold to say that the influence of Faber, if not so radical as Foster's nor so various as Browning's, has yet been marked and beneficial. As a spiritual pathologist F. W. Faber stands without a rival. Old Ames, in the preface to his sagacious and most practical treatise, *De Conscientia*, observes that in this department the Romanists are superior to our own writers. This certificate, coming from the author of one of the most effective polemics against Rome, the *Bellarminus Enervatus*, may be unhesitatingly accepted. Certainly it is true of Faber. The whole human subject lies open to his scrutiny. With the skill of the trained anatomist he cuts down upon the spot he wishes to lay bare, and dissects away all obstructing material.

He speaks with his eye steadily on the object. He sees the reality and he tells what he sees in one of the most lucid and racy styles ever employed by an English writer. The gravity of his subject and the austerity of his judgment are relieved by the tender sympathy of a man who knows the difficulty of holy living, and by a humour which does not so much leap out in sudden flashes, as maintains throughout a steady brightness. His therapeutics are, of course, mixed—strangely mixed. One has to sift out advices which seem childish. In a word, the reader must discount his Romanism; but having done so he feels he is in the company of a man who knows him as if he had lived with him all his days, and to whom the spiritual life is an actuality of vital importance. The cure of the soul is, in Faber, reduced to something like a science. He does not fall into the mistake of some writers on experimental religion, who treat the soul mechanically, and leave in the mind the impression that all one needs to do in order to attain perfection is to attend to certain

rules. But hopefulness springing from a sounder source breathes through all Faber's writings, and counsels suggested by an unrivalled knowledge of men's actual infirmities convey encouragement and lasting help. In pure theology, also, Faber has rare excellences. His "The Creator and the Creation" is a presentation of the love of God so affecting as to be irresistible. The material which his theological insight and learning gather is transfused by his poetic genius into a form all aglow with finely controlled emotion.

Other books claim to be spoken of; but we must stand aside, and let others pay their tribute to

> "The dead, but sceptred sovrans who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

XII

JOSEPH PARKER

IT would be difficult for me to say what books have most influenced me, because I have not in any sense been a literary specialist. I have made it my business to read anything and everything as it came in my way, soon making up my mind whether the thing was worth being read or not, and acting accordingly. Probably few men have read more half-books than I have done. Probably even half-books is too large a word to use, for generally within the first dozen or twenty pages I have made up my mind whether the book would repay attentive perusal. I have no particular method of reading. I observe with interest and surprise that many men have commonplace-books in which they enter memoranda of literary

courses ; but no such book has been in my possession since I was in my teens. Early in life I was greatly delighted with what used to be known as Todd's " Index Rerum." It seemed to be just the thing for the juvenile reader. But when I became a man I put away juvenile devices and auxiliaries.

It may sound as somewhat singular if I say in sober truth that the book which has influenced me most is the Bible. I remember being on a college committee, and hearing the papers of a young candidate for studentship read. One of the questions was, " What books have you perused ? " and the answer was, " First the Bible." At this point there was a general laugh in the committee. The laughter was unseasonable, though perhaps not inexplicable, for I venture to say that probably no great book has been so little read as the Book of God. I am not ashamed, then, to say that the Bible has infinitely beyond all other books influenced my life, my thought, and my purpose. Then, of course, there are countless thousands of books, all belonging to this great central

volume, because indebted to it for their existence, as branches and twigs are indebted to the central stem.

Going outside the biblical line, I may say that no books have influenced me so much as those of a biographical cast. I love to study human nature. Human nature can often be better studied through the letters and gossipings, the free conversations, the repartees and confidences of off-hand communications, than by an anatomy which might be considered critical and philosophical. Oftentimes a man discovers himself more in an incidental sentence than in a carefully composed period. All books that relate to the interpretation of human nature greatly interest me; hence my love for the drama, for biography, for a certain kind of fiction, for memoirs of great men of every class; in these I find continual delight and frequent inspiration. As a minister, I am not ashamed to say that the lives of some of the early revival preachers have greatly influenced me. The week long I have been preparing my

little essays or papers which are called sermons; towards Saturday evening the spirit begins to fail and greatly needs spiritual stimulus; for this spiritual stimulus I go to the lives of the first Methodist preachers, and following their course, so zealous, so self-sacrificing, so apostolic, the fire begins to kindle, and I long for the time to come when I shall have to stand before men and deliver my holy message.

Some men are happily able to name three or four books which have been life-long companions. They do not hesitate to say that they care more for these books than they have ever cared for any others. I can quite understand their partiality and their loyalty. At the same time I am unable to name any three or four books which have constituted the kernel of my library. I think it no intellectual disgrace to any man that he should change his books—this is to say, that he should modify his opinion of old favourites, and grow onward and upward towards new styles and literary forms. I do not blame any boy for believing that Pollok's

"Course of Time" is equal to Milton's "Paradise Lost," or that Blair's "Grave" is equal to Byron's "Cain." "When I was a child I thought as a child." Even to-day I wish to speak with becoming respect of Pollok's "Course of Time," but I cannot now exalt Pollok to an equality with Milton. There is an intelligible influence which appeals to the youthful mind, but the youthful mind grows in capacity and in penetration, and is able, as years roll on, to see wider horizons, and to read what is written on the loftier domes of literature. We ought to be thankful for the books which helped us in our infancy and juvenility; but it would be the very infatuation of partiality to profess that they ever retained and deepened their hold upon us. Any books that influence me must be more than paper and ink. They must abound in suggestiveness; they must glitter with points; their sentences must be as index-fingers pointing to long vistas of thought and to great possibilities of development. When authors who are thus characterised lay hold of me I claim them

as vital and lifelong friends. The author must not say all he wishes to communicate. He must be a master of literary ellipsis. I must feel about him as was said about the great Worker, that if all this man had to say were written out in full the world could not contain the books that would be published.

Whilst I have been thus obliged to confess to great desultoriness of reading, I will also claim some definiteness in my literary no-method. I have sometimes surprised myself by knowing well where to look for the very kind of information I have required at any particular moment. My memory is rather a catalogue than a library. I know where to go for information, illustration, stimulus, and many other needful elements in literary exercise and action. Without remembering the whole course over which the author has driven, I recollect with considerable vividness the course which he proposed to take, and his general method of treating his subjects. Consequently, I know more than I seem to know, that is to say, I know it as a man might know where he

has laid up his property, and how to get at that property in the hour of necessity.

Now I come to think of it, there are two or three books which I should really not like to lose from my library. Shall I say that amongst them is Buckle's "History of Civilisation"? The three little volumes in which Buckle's Introduction is written are to me a constant source of pleasure. Buckle is emphatically a writer after my own heart. He has a gracious way of assuming that his readers know nothing about the subject, and yet without making them feel their ignorance he immediately proceeds to inform it. By what patience is that skilled writer marked! His allusions are a million thick. His footnotes would seem to represent, in summary, the contents of the Bodleian Library. Every line is a piece of information. Every criticism is a lesson in the art of reading and study. Nor should I like to give up any of Mr. Lecky's books. I often think of Lecky and Buckle together, though Buckle has an acrid vein which I happily miss in the historian of European Morals and European Rationalism.

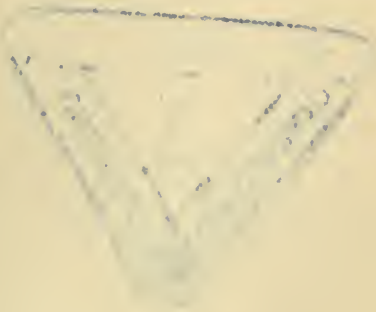
They are both learned without being ponderous, and each has a vividness of style which lights up the whole subject with ample but not dazzling illumination.

Some books I keep merely for dipping into. Strange as it may appear to some, I can often pray with greater liberty, with truer definiteness of expression, after a page of Carlyle than after many pages of almost any other man's writing. After reading a few pages of a very feeble book—say a report of a philanthropic society whose philanthropy is infinitely better than its literature—I am glad to put the bad taste out of my mouth by a short spell at Edmund Burke. After an irritating article in the newspapers—especially a foolish diatribe against Mr. Gladstone—I am glad to hasten to some of the older authors to cool myself in their profound tranquillity.

I read a good deal of fiction, as may be supposed—fiction such as George Eliot wrote, and Charles Dickens, and Thackeray, not to mention the great magician of all, Sir Walter Scott. A man who has not been influenced

by the higher order of fiction is a man whose mental habits I cannot understand, and for whose mental peculiarities I thank heaven I am not responsible.

Every man must read after his own fashion. It is idle to lay down any mechanical plan of literary discipline. I am one of the men who cannot read consecutively merely for the sake of boasting that I have got through so many pages. If a book is not interesting to me, I throw it away instantly. I do not consider it to be my duty to spend the day with a bore if I can get rid of him. This is exactly the view which I take of any book. On the other hand, when a book is vitally sympathetic, and suited to the immediate necessities of the hour, I know what it is to describe it as "sweeter than honey, yea, than the honeycomb."

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